

## Helen Stewart Statue To Be Dedicated at Old Fort

December 3, 2011

Helen J. Stewart, often called, "The First Lady of Las Vegas" will have a statue dedicated to her near her former home, now the grounds of the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park at the southeast corner of Washington and Las Vegas Boulevard.

Helen Jane Wiser Stewart (1854-1926) moved to Las Vegas with her husband in 1882. Two years later her husband Archibald Stewart was killed at the Kiel ranch, and Helen took over running the "Los Vegas Ranch". In later years, Helen and her father Hiram Wiser began buying land in response to rumors of the railroad going through the Las Vegas Valley. In 1902 Helen sold over 1800 acres to Senator Clark of Montana, who had ties to the railroad. In May, 1905, a land sale occurred, and the City of Las Vegas developed.

Helen Stewart was a civic leader. She was a founding member of Christ Episcopal Church, a charter member of the Mesquite Club, first woman elected in Clark County to the school board, first woman to serve on a jury and first President of the Nevada Historical Society in Las Vegas, to name a few of her accomplishments.

This work is a culmination of events that began in September 2008 when various community groups such as the Southern Nevada Women's History Project, League of Women Voters, Daughters of the American Revolution, Nevada Council for History Education, Mesquite Club and Christ Church Episcopal Ladies Guild members joined with the Friends of the Fort to kick off fund raising for the statue at the Old Fort. Unfortunately, the down turn in the economy stalled fund raising efforts.

The Friends of the Fort, a non-profit organization that works with the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park, applied for and was awarded \$99,000 by the Las Vegas Centennial Commission on July 26, 2010, to fund the statue of Helen Stewart. Dr. Linda Miller as Helen J. Stewart and Phyllis Weaver as Delphine Squires, made the presentation. Sculptor Benjamin Victor was chosen to design and create the statue. He also sculpted the Sarah Winnemucca statue in Statuary Hall in the US Capitol.

A documentary chronicling her life will also be produced by Gwendolyn Clancy from Reno. It will be available for viewing at the Old Fort and for distribution to schools.

On December 3, 2011, join government officials, family members of Helen Stewart and civic leaders reflecting the organizations on which she made an impact. The dedication of the statue begins at 12 p.m. with light refreshments to follow.

For more information contact the Old Las Vegas Mormon Fort State Historic Park at 486-3511.